

**Program Strengths:**

- The philosophy program supports the university's educational mission and promotes Western's Core Values: academic excellence, educational opportunity, personal growth and social responsibility.
- The design of the philosophy program resonates with Best Practices models for philosophy programs as found in the American Philosophical Association's "Statement on the Major."
- Philosophy courses enhance general education, provide required courses for three programs outside the department, and support the First Year Experience program.
- Students have the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills that allow them to succeed as successful contributors to a democratic society.
- Students acquire important skills that are highly sought: critical thinking, complex problem solving, analytical reasoning, and the ability to communicate clearly.
- Faculty members have a reputation for excellent teaching; are professionally active; and participate in service activities in the university, community, and professional associations.
- The department offers sizeable scholarships funded through the Mary Olive Woods Trust.
- The Student Philosophical Association is a vibrant, student-run and organized hub of philosophical activity.
- The department hosts internationally famous philosophers as Mary Olive Woods Lecturers.
- We are a very efficient program with our lower division courses that enroll on average above 92% of capacity and the ratio of majors per faculty members among the highest of public universities in Illinois.
- Graduates of the program have success entering graduate school and law school.

**Program Weaknesses:**

- Our loss of faculty members in 2011 and 2012 was followed by a decrease in courses offered, a significant decrease in SCH, a subsequent decrease in majors in 2013, and finally a decrease in degrees conferred in 2014 and 2015.
- Compared to benchmark institutions, we have fewer teaching faculty members in our department. We compare even less favorably in size with other Illinois public universities. This limits our ability to offer the breadth of courses that would both strengthen our program and enhance our ability to recruit.
- We lack a tenure track position for a teaching faculty member whose primary specialization is in ethics, an area vital to a strong philosophy program. Currently, this lack is filled by a Unit B position, and the program is doing well (as noted above), but the person holding the position is on the job market.
- There is a lack of understanding by graduates, current students, prospective students and the parents of prospective students regarding the practical value of a degree in philosophy.

**Strategies for program improvement**

- We plan to create an option in religious studies within the philosophy major. There are numerous goals both disciplines share, including emphasizing the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, improving an understanding of the human condition, and helping students become better informed citizens in a democratic society, while also developing practical skills such as improving one's abilities to solve problems and to communicate more clearly. The chart below shows Religious Studies majors and degrees conferred combined with Philosophy majors and degrees conferred from 2011-2015:

Philosophy & Religious Studies combined	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	Mean
Majors	27	21	13	16	22	19.8
Second Majors	7	7	3	4	6	5.4
Total Majors	34	28	16	20	28	25.2
Degrees Conferred	8	11	8	1	2	6
Second Majors Degrees Conferred	0	4	2	2	1	1.8
Total Degrees Conferred	8	15	10	3	3	7.8

The resulting Philosophy major would have three options: the general (traditional) Philosophy option, the Pre-Law option, and the Religious Studies option.

- Other curriculum changes planned include creating an internship and a lower division course that might have broader appeal to the student population at WIU.
- In order to maintain continuity in the program and continue to offer a breadth of courses, we recommend changing the Unit B position to a tenure track, Unit A position for someone whose primary specialization is in ethics.

#### **Ongoing and developing strategies for recruitment and retention:**

- Continue promoting the expanded Mary Olive Woods Scholarships, with a top scholarship valued at \$6,000, and the \$3,000 scholarships, that as of 2015, are no longer limited to two in the department.
- Retain the Unit B position initiated in 2014, or (preferably) create a tenure track, Unit A position for someone whose primary specialization is in ethics.
- Continue working with admissions counselors and academic advisors to keep them informed of the value of the philosophy major and the scholarships we have available.
- Continue to develop our department web page, posters, and brochures to provide students with information about the major and the practical advantages of majoring in philosophy.

#### **Other planned recruitment and retention projects:**

- Send letters to Catholic High Schools in Illinois and Eastern Iowa to inform them of our programs and the scholarships we have available.
- Participate in the creation of a Living Learning Community focused on Liberal Arts in cooperation with other humanities departments and Student Services.
- Extend our letters to more prospective students by working with the Admissions Office to provide information about the program, scholarships available, and to encourage a visit.
- Create second major and minor opportunities for business, LEJA, math, and natural science majors to support the development of the intellectual skills that employers desire.

#### **Timeline and goals:**

- 2014-15: First year of adjunct; first year of increased publicity for the new MOW scholarships.
- 2015-16: Process curricular changes; plan for the Liberal Arts LLC; increase letters to prospective students; create “job workshops;” eliminate the limit on the \$3,000 MOW scholarships; confer five degrees.
- 2016-17: If approved, first year of the option in Religious Studies available; recruit for internships; revise other initiatives from 2015-16; confer six degrees.
- 2017-18: Continue revisions of initiatives and curricular changes; confer seven degrees.